

McGuffy's Diner

by David Gunn

© 1975 (November seventh, to be precise)

The Players A **Tolerant Waitress** and Five **Raucous Customers**
The Setting **McGuffy's Diner**
The Time *Four in the Morning!*

The players should feel free to improvise around their spoken parts. The original performances involved percussion instruments, which upped the rowdiness to an, er, unpleasant level. If *that* is your aim, however, then so be it!

Waitress Welcome, welcome all to McGuffy's Diner!

Customer 1 Food, food, gimme food! C'mon, I haven't got all day! Hurry up!

Customer 2 Hey waitress, take my order! Hey, do you recommend anything? Huh? Do you?

Customer 3 Hey, where's McGuffy? Are *you* McGuffy? Hey waitress, where am I?

Customer 4 So you're the waitress, eh? Well, let's have some chow! I need food, and I need it *now!*

Customer 5 My, my. How *kind* we are this morning. Well, I for one am *quite* hungry, and am certainly in the mood for some nice grub!

Waitress Please, good folks, a moment's patience, a moment's patience. We aren't usually this busy ... at four in the morning.

Customer 1 Don't care. Want food. Let's go! Cut the crap, I'm hungry! It's chow time!

Customer 2 Hey waitress, what's good? Can you tell me that? What's today's special? Huh? Hey! Hey you! I'm talking to *you*, you know.

Customer 3 So it's four in the morning – so, who cares? Hurry up with the eats before it's *five* in the morning!

Customer 4 Are you the only waitress? Look, I'm hungry. And I want some food right now! Quick, before I have another anxiety attack!

Customer 5 Goodness gracious, I haven't eaten in a fortnight, or at least since lunch. So let's get this meal on the road, okay, Dearie?

Waitress Good people, settle down. Settle down! The grill is hot. We've got a lot ... of cooking to do. To you. I mean *for you*. (to #1) Now, kind and hungry sir. What might you like to eat?

Customer 1 I would like ... I would like – have you a menu (in English)?

Waitress No.

Customer 1 Just as well. I can't read very well this morning. I'm *so* tired!

Waitress I thought you were hungry?!

Customer 1 And so I am. I'll have an egg.

Waitress An egg?

Customer 1 Well, perhaps two.

Waitress Two eggs?

Customers (in unison) Two eggs, two eggs, two eggs, two eggs!

Waitress You want two eggs, do you? Well, I'll just write that down so I don't forget. You wouldn't want me to forget it, would you?

Customer 1 Umm, no.

Waitress You see, we're not usually this busy ...

Customers ***At four in the morning!*** (They hoot and carry on for a bit.)

Waitress (to #2) And what would *you* like?

Customer 1 But wait, wait. I'm not done yet! I'm still hungry! Don't I get a chance to order something to drink? Waitress, *please* don't leave me like this. Please, please, please!

Customer 2 Shut up! You had your chance! We're hungry too, you know! There's no room for hogs here!

Customer 3 Aw, pipe down! Stop being such a pig. You churl! Why doncha have a little respect for us other hungry guys?!

Customer 4 Listen, you. Shut yer trap! You got your food ordered, so there! So, be quiet!

Customer 5 Pig, pig, pig! Oink-oink to *you*, my gluttonous companion!

Waitress Please, kind and hungry folk, settle down. The cook will quit. He's done it before, don't make him sore. (to #2) Now quickly, what may I tell him to prepare, just the way you like it?

Customer 2 I want a cheeseburger!

Waitress A cheeseburger?

Customer 2 And a glass of milk.

Waitress Well now, if you had a choice, which would you rather have – a cheeseburger *or* a glass of milk?

Customer 2 (emotionally) Why must I choose? Can't I have a cheeseburger *and* a glass of milk?

Customer 1 Aw, shaddup, you schmo! You're nothing but a troublemaker, so shut your trap! And quit kicking the table!

Customer 3 You dolt! Don't wait on him, waitress. Take my word for it, he's not worth it!

Customer 4 Pipe down! You want too much! You *always* want too much! Waitress! C'mon Dearie, and take my order!

Customer 5 Now, you mustn't be intimidated by him, my dear waitress. He's only a nudnik, you know.

Waitress Now settle down. The cook will surely leave. *I'll* leave! And then where will you be, eh? *Then* where will you be? (to #2) Now choose, kind and hungry sir. It's only fair. Please choose!

Customer 2 Wellllll, since I'm so hungry, I guess I'd order the cheeseburger.

Waitress Very well, that's one glass of milk. Small? Did you want a small glass?

Customer 2 (confused) Uhhhhhh ...

Waitress One small glass of milk. (to #3) And what now would *you* like? Something fresh and wiggly? A cold plate of spaghetti? Hmm?

Customer 1 Aw, he's not ready! Look waitress, you can plainly see that he's not ready! C'mon, go start my eggs. (reaching into pocket and withdrawing a coin) Here waitress, look! I've got your tip already!

Customer 2 Look, waitress, he's not ready now and he probably never will be! So can I have my glass of milk now? And what about a cheeseburger? You *were* kidding, weren't you?

Customer 4 He's not ready! Hey waitress, he's not ready! But *I'm* ready. Isn't that what you want? Say, how about some water? And don't forget the straw.

Customer 5 Stop it, stop it! *I'm* the one who's hungry, not him! Those other chaps aren't *nearly* in need of eats as much as I am! And might I have a clean napkin? This one is soiled.

Waitress Now settle down, or I'll pour fresh hot coffee all over your trousers! You wouldn't want your thighs steamed now, would you? (to #3) All right, my esurient enchilada, here comes your last chance!

Customer 3 Hand-roasted duck, smooth green peas, slippery mashed potatoes and a warm cup of tap water.

Customer 1 Too much, too much! He's getting too much! Look, I just got eggs!

Customer 2 And me getting but a small glass of milk! Hey, waitress, are you playing favorites or something?

Customer 4 Too much! You want too much, just like that other guy! *Way* too much!

Customer 5 Now I simply *must* protest! I'm quite hungry. I said so earlier. And now this, this *charlatan* is allowed to order entirely too much chow! How dreadfully unfair!

Waitress If you don't behave yourselves and settle down, there'll be no chow at all! (to #4) And stop mussing up that napkin! *Gracious*, it's not easy to adjust to so many hungry people ...

Customers ***At four in the morning!*** (They're extra rowdy for a few moments.)

Waitress (to #4) Now I can tell, just by looking at you, that you want a nice bowl of cereal, don't you!

Customer 4 Do I have a choice?

Waitress What do *you* think?

Customer 4 Oh, a bowl of cereal would most certainly be nice.

Customers (in unison) A bowl, a bowl, a bowl ... of *cereal!* (They whoop briefly.)

Customer 4 Umm, I *do* get milk with that, don't I?

Waitress Oh, (pointing to #2) *he's* getting the milk!

Customers (in unison) And a small one at that! A small glass of milk! (They hoot.)

Waitress (to #5) Now, then. *You* don't seem to have ordered yet. Is something the matter? Don't you like the cuisine? Are you trying to cause trouble? The fresh hot coffee is only moments away, you know.

Customer 1 Fry his thighs, fry his thighs! C'mon waitress, the cook is waiting and his grill is hot. You said so yourself! So let's get my order to him so *I* can get the eggs!

Customer 2 Fry his thighs, fry his thighs! And fry my cheeseburger too, okay? Say, this table's a little dirty. I sure hope you clean it before I eat. Hey, waitress? Hey!

Customer 3 Fry his thighs, fry his thighs! Hey waitress, skip him. He doesn't even *look* hungry. Now me, I got me a mean and hungry look. So go get my duck and peas. And water, too.

Customer 4 Fry his thighs, fry his thighs! He had his chance! And now it's *your* chance to serve me that cereal – *with* milk, if you please. It's four in the morning, so could you hurry it up? C'mon, fry his thighs.

Customer 5 Oh, but I *am* hungry! And I know precisely what I'll order, too, given the opportunity. If *only* I might be given that chance! I realize I haven't been the best of customers, but I'll make it up to you, you'll see.

Waitress Very well. I'll make an exception and wait on you this time. Especially since I see that bulge in your pocket, which most certainly will be my gratuity.

Customer 5 *Indeed!* (He jingles some coins in his pocket.)

Customer 1 Just *try* it, Moneybags, and I'll ram those coins down your windpipe! I'm not kidding, either.

Customer 2 Oho, so you think a bribe'll get you better service, eh? Well two can play that game! Here, waitress (holding up a coin). Here's a quarter.

Customer 3 Fraud! Lousy fraud! Just wait till we're outside. *You'll* see how far your money goes then!

Customer 4 Hey, waitress! Don't fall for it! His money's no good. Just ask anyone! Hey, are you sure you're the *only* waitress?

Waitress Settle down, good and hungry people, settle down! The cook will leave. (to #5) Here now is your last chance to order. Please do.

Customer 5 And so I shall. And thank you, kind waitress. You have once again restored my faith in human nature. And yours, too. I'll have a chocolate sundae.

Waitress But ... but it's *Friday!*

Customers (in unison) Monday, Tuesday, Tuesday, Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday, Wednesday, Monday, Friday, and Tuesday, too. But *not* Sunday! (A brief, rowdy period ensues.)

Customer 5 Nevertheless, that is what I order. You may do jolly well what you want to do. But, waitress and fellow hearty trenchermen, failure to comply with my order will result in nothing less than a ruckus!

Ruckus Ensues. Waitress leaves the area for a moment, or perhaps two moments, then returns.

Waitress Welcome, welcome all to McGuffy's Diner! We're not usually this busy ...

Customers *At four in the morning!* (They settle down.)

Waitress And so, I shall go and see to your orders. Your orders!

Waitress leaves. Customers grumble quietly. Soon enough, the waitress returns with a tray of something. (You choose.)

Waitress Here we are! And free nougats for the kids, compliments of the cook.

Customer 1 Oh boy, oh boy! The cook is dead! Long live the cook! Hey waitress, *what* kids? I don't see any kids around here! Not only that but I don't see my eggs, either! What does *that* mean?

Customer 2 Oh boy, oh boy! The cook is dead! Long live the cook! Say, can we eat now? I mean, can we *really* eat now? No kidding? However, if that's my cheeseburger, I'm suddenly not hungry after all.

Customer 3 Oh boy, oh boy! The cook is dead! Long live the cook! Nougats, you say? Such a treat! However, that really doesn't look much like duck and water, you know.

Customer 4 Oh boy, oh boy! The cook is dead! Long live the cook! And long live *you*, my dear waitress. And long live me, and long live Uncle Basil, and long live Aunt Bessie, and long live cousin Burnoose, too!

Customer 5 Oh boy, oh boy! The cook is dead! Long live the cook! And now, dear waitress, am I to eat this rather poor excuse of a sundae with a spoon or do you recommend a catheter?

Waitress dumps contents of tray on table and leaves. Customers pick over the offerings like hyenas over a week-old jackal carcass. (Use your imagination!) Before long, the waitress reappears.

Waitress Well, you're done. And now, would anyone care for some dessert? Some luscious runny pie? Or a steaming hunk of chewy sausage? Or how about the House Special?

Customer 1 Dessert, dessert, bring on the dessert! Also the dancing bears, if you have any! I mean I'm *really* ready for something sweet, plus a bit of entertainment, too.

Customer 2 Dessert, dessert, bring on the dessert! Hey waitress, what's the House Special? Hmm? Is it really that good? Do you honestly recommend it? Well, *do* you? Hey, are you listening?

Customer 3 Dessert, dessert, bring on the dessert! Also the dancing bears, please! Say waitress, I've heard stories about House Specials, and I'm a bit leery, if you know what I mean.

Customer 4 Dessert, dessert, bring on the dessert! And since I've been on the road since, I think, November, bring on that floor show that he's talking about, too. And how about some more milk, hmm?

Customer 5 Dessert, dessert, bring on the dessert! Even though I supposedly just polished off a chocolate sundae, I admit that my thirst for something nice and sweet hasn't been slaked. So what're *you* doing later, Dearie?

Waitress Please settle down, kind and hungry folks. The cook will leave. *I'll* leave. And then where will you be, eh? The House Special today is very good. Also, it's the only dessert we have, for we usually aren't this busy ...

Customers ***At four in the morning!*** (They're briefly rowdy.)

Waitress Very well, then you're all having House Specials?

Customer 1 Yes. No. I mean, yes! Hey waitress, what *is* the House Special, anyway? Is it bigger than a breadbox? *Is* it a breadbox?

Customer 2 No. Yes. I mean, no! Wait, I want it, I guess, but I'm not sure. Please don't rush me. I can't think clearly when I'm on the spot like this.

Customer 3 Yes. No. Oh, I don't know! Hey, what's going on here? Waitress? I don't understand. What's featured on the sweet trolley today?

Customer 4 No. Yes. Hey waitress, where are you? Where's the cook? Where's the House Special? Hey, did I really have my cereal already?

Customer 5 Yes. No. What? *What?* Hey waitress, what is reality? Hmm? Can you answer me that? What is reality, anyway? Yes? Are you saying "yes?"

Waitress Good people, settle down. Settle down. The cook will leave, and I'm not kidding about that! (glancing over her shoulder) Oh dear. The cook *has* left! Well, that settles that, I guess. No House Special – for *anyone!*

Customer 1 Nertz! Nertz, nertz, fudge and nuts! Jeez, Louise! Dumb cook, now why'd he have to go and do *that?! Boy*, am I miffed. And sore, too. And I'm not talking muscle fatigue, either!

Customer 2 What?! You're kidding, right? Boy, now I'm *really* upset, even more than my stomach was after I ate. See, I *really* wanted House Special, whatever it was. I mean *really!*

Customer 3 Oh, what tough luck. I, too, had my heart set on House Special, whatever it was. And now *this* has to happen. Oh bad, bad, bad luck! Say waitress, can you cook? Can you whip up a batch of House Special?

Customer 4 ***Nooooooooooooo!*** Hey, waitress. Go tell that guy to get back there and rustle up those House Specials and be quick about it! Hey, are you sure you're the *only* waitress?

Customer 5 Why, this is quite awful! Makes me want to say a *very* bad word!! It all makes me so aggravated, too. But waitress, you still haven't told me what reality is. And what happened to those nice dancing bears, hmm?

Waitress And now, kind and not so hungry people, your checks!

Waitress presents guest checks to customers. There is a general uproar. Food (or something) is tossed about. There are noisy grunts, and then ...

Customer 1 Two eggs two eggs, two eggs two eggs, two eggs two eggs, two eggs two eggs (etc.)
Customer 2 two eggs two eggs, two eggs two eggs, two eggs two eggs, two ... (etc.)
Customer 3 two eggs two eggs, two eggs two eggs, ... (etc.)
Customer 4 two eggs two eggs, ... (etc.)
Customer 5 two
 eggs two eggs, two eggs two eggs, two eggs ... (etc.)

At some point, the waitress either faints or leaves or does *something* that will bring this piece to a logical, post-modern conclusion. Performance on a proscenium stage would allow the curtain to fall, abruptly ending the, ah, the histrionics.

The End.